DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 416 535 CS 509 731

AUTHOR Burnett, Ann; Olson, Clark D.
TITLE The Dark Side of Debate: The Downfall of Interpersonal Relationships.
PUB DATE 1997-11-00
NOTE 26p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Communication Association (83rd, Chicago, IL, November 19-23, 1997).
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Communication Skills; *Debate; Higher Education; *Interpersonal Communication; *Interpersonal Relationship; Research Needs; Student Participation
IDENTIFIERS Compliance Gaining; Uncertainty Reduction

ABSTRACT

Debaters are trained to think differently from others, and while that type of thinking might be useful, it can be detrimental to interpersonal relationships. Participation in debate creates a unique standpoint, which, in turn, plays havoc with a debater's ability to cope with uncertainty, encourages second-guessing, impedes rather than fosters dialectical thinking, rewards uni-dimensional compliance-gaining strategies, and focuses on depth over breadth in self-disclosure. Uncertainty reduction theory, in this context, works on two levels--the debater might cross the line of social appropriateness, badgering his/her partner with questions until the relationship terminates, or, the student might never feel he/she has enough information to reduce the uncertainty. Debaters are taught that no statement is completely truthful and every statement should be second-guessed. Debaters tend to use argument and reason-giving to gain compliance. Debaters might attempt to win an "interpersonal" position just to win, merely for the ego satisfaction of winning without concern for the larger bearing on the relationship. By investing in a position, argument, or side, the thinking of those in debate becomes polarized, exactly the opposite of the pluralism that is necessary for interactional competence. Social penetration theory helps explain why debaters' relationships tend to decline--decreased intimacy is associated with increased depth, presumably due to the discussions individuals have when a relationship is terminating. Continued research on the longitudinal effects of debate training must be undertaken to assess the health and success of interpersonal relationships. (Contains 45 references.) (RS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 416 535

The Dark Side of Debate: The Downfall of Interpersonal Relationships

Ann Burnett

321B Minard

Department of Communication Studies

North Dakota State University

Fargo, ND 58105

aburnett@plains.nodak.edu

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
A. Burnett
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Clark D. Olson [1]

Department of Communication

Arizona State University

Tempe, AZ 85287

iccdo@asuacad

CS509731

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The Dark Side of Debate: The Downfall of Interpersonal Relationships

Over the past several decades, scholars, former debate coaches, and debaters have lauded the advantages of participating in competitive debate (McBath, 1975; Parson, 1984). Debaters learn how to reason critically, do in-depth research, speak "on their feet," learn about contemporary world problems, and, upon graduation, achieve great successes in graduate school or in organizations. As former debaters, we are grateful for having been trained in these skills; however, we also have observed that there is a "dark side" to competing extensively in debate activities. The very type of thinking in which one is trained to engage while debating can be detrimental to interpersonal relationships. Therefore, the purpose of this essay is to outline some common interpersonal communication theories and perspectives, and to examine how "thinking like a debater" can lead to unsatisfying interpersonal communication.[1]

Ideological Perspective

Between the two of us, we have had nearly fifty years of experience in debate, either as debaters or as coaches. Our aim in this essay is to use our personal experience, observations, as well as knowledge of the experience of other debaters and coaches to help explain a phenomenon which we have experienced or witnessed for many years. Thus, while this theoretical application is not based on experimental data, it is ethnographic in nature, based on years of lived experience and

---

[1]Although our study focuses on debaters, as we have continued our research, we are beginning to discover that the same difficulties in interpersonal relationships could pertain to individual events competitors as well. We will explore that angle in future research.

participant observation.[2] We acknowledge that individuals have difficulties in relationships for many reasons; for example, the mere fact that debaters and coaches are gone from their homes for extensive periods of time can be harmful to relational maintenance. However, recognizing that relationships can be ineffective for a myriad of reasons, we still contend that one's way of thinking will profoundly affect how one interacts with other people.

Our main argument is that debaters approach relationships, particularly conflict, differently than others. Debaters are trained in argumentation skills of logic and analysis; therefore, relationships and events which occur therein must be explained utilizing principles of logic. This situation is similar to that faced by lawyers who are trained to believe that all value systems and principles can be challenged; this belief can cause the individual to be skeptical when a loved one expresses a desire or aspiration (Fischer, 1990). Unfortunately, some interpersonal scholars have noted that relational satisfaction is not predicated on logic (Davis & Latty-Mann, 1987; Hecht, 1978). For example, some successful relationships defy explanation -- outsiders might wonder how the two individuals ever formed a relationship. In other cases, it would make sense for a relationship to be perfectly healthy; e.g., a relationship between two interpersonal scholars, yet the relationship might be fraught with conflict and tension.

The notion that relationships must make logical sense affects the manner in which debaters deal with conflict as well. Thus, while debaters might think they are providing logical responses to a partner's position, the feelings of the partner might be paramount. Feelings can take precedence over logic, and feelings are not always logical. In a recent conflict, for example, one of the authors

---

[2]Currently, we are collecting data which will add to the discussion presented in this paper.

was told, "You can provide 100 reasons for this, but I feel x, and I don't care if it's logical or not." Debate can also make one hostile and combative; we have both been told to "quit arguing like a debater," and/or "this isn't a debate round." In fact, similarly, a lawyer is trained to value "winning" an argument -- "it is how well one argues that really counts" -- not preserving the relationship (Fischer, 1990).

In general, then, our position is that, as debaters, we are trained to think differently than others. While that type of thinking might be useful in academics and on the job, it can be detrimental to one's interpersonal satisfaction. The remainder of this paper will outline some predominant interpersonal perspectives and will discuss how "thinking like a debater" allows one to operate in each perspective.

Standpoint Theory

According to Wood (1994, p. 154), standpoint theory holds that "humans are shaped by diverse material, social, and historical circumstances within which their lives are embedded." A standpoint, then, is not just a position; it is a "sense of being engaged" (Hartstock, 1983, p. 285). The most commonly accepted type of standpoint is gender (Wood, 1993). That is, instead of viewing behaviors as being attached to biological sex, behavior is learned as a concept of gender. However, standpoints are created socially, so that "roles, experiences, and understandings entailed in them shape individuals' thoughts, feelings, and actions" (Wood, 1995, p.38). Thus, standpoints do not necessarily have to be gender-related.

One's standpoint, then, is dependent on several components. First, the context and environment in which people are involved over a lifetime are important (Wood, 1993). In addition,

and perhaps most importantly, standpoints are dependent on the groups to which one belongs (Wood, 1995). Social groups determine how people think and behave; therefore, social groups can help form our views about relationships. In fact, as group membership solidifies, a culture is created in which group members understand the goals, behaviors, and ways of communicating with one another -- something those outside the group do not understand. As a result of the environment, coupled with the nature of group membership, individuals tend to depend on self-talk to shape and re-shape their identities to cohere with the expectations and perspectives of others with whom they interact (Wood, 1994).

Although the influence of debaters as a social group cannot in any way be as pervasive of the influence of gender, those who have competed in debate become a part of a unique social group which creates a standpoint for interacting and having relationships with others. Participants in debate travel from early October through late April, almost every weekend. During the week, squad members meet for practice rounds and work sessions. Frequently, squad members socialize with one another outside of the academic and competitive environment. Therefore, students who compete at even a moderate level can expect to spend a great deal of their time in college with the debate team.

While group dynamics vary from team to team, the forensics environment typically features some common characteristics. Students are competitive; the purpose of the activity is to win. Those who do well are accorded more credibility by the others in the group; those who do not perform well are usually unknown. In fact, winning the National Debate Tournament, or even qualifying for a final round can become all-consuming events, molding the standpoint of debaters

and coaches. On some squads, students compete against each other for the opportunity to travel. In addition, debaters are trained to express themselves clearly and without hesitation.

Recall that the thesis of standpoint theory is that one engages in self-talk and shapes or re-shapes his/her behaviors to correspond with the perspectives or views of others in the group. The group, then, has a tremendous influence on how individuals within it view relationships and how they deal with relational issues. As one becomes enmeshed in the debate culture, it is difficult to not consider and make changes in one's communication behaviors. The typical student (and coach) in this group is outgoing, argumentative and assertive. Thus, because the norm in the culture fosters such behavior, debaters (and coaches) tend to model it. In fact, in order to fit in and to be considered successful in the activity, it is important to be able to be similar to and gain acceptance with other group members. Such a life change is similar to that which lawyers experience: "a fundamental change in world-view, a change in how they experience meanings and significances of human situations, as well as a change in the ways in which they relate to them" (Fischer, 1990). It is no wonder, then, that debaters who "live and breathe" forensics for four years (as well as group members who are not as immersed) become and assist in creating a culture in which the members are introduced to a unique way of approaching problem solving, competition and relational issues. Our position is that debaters approach relationships from a particular standpoint which might create the relational problems described throughout the remainder of this paper.

Uncertainty Reduction Theory

In everyday interactions with others, individuals cope with uncertainty as to the communication patterns and actions of the other individual. As a result, one of our main goals is to

reduce the uncertainty of the interaction, a concept called uncertainty reduction theory (URT) (see, for example, Berger & Calabrese, 1975). As uncertainty decreases, individuals might experience greater intimacy, increased verbal communication and nonverbal affiliation, and increased similarity and liking (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). On the other hand, when uncertainty remains high, individuals feel uncomfortable and conversation is effortful and awkward (Berger, 1986). In those cases, high uncertainty leads to the opposite effect: intimacy, verbal and nonverbal communication, similarity and liking remain low (Berger & Calabrese, 1975).

The primary method for reducing uncertainty is question-asking through conversation (Douglas, 1994). Berger and others have found that, when uncertainty is high in initial interactions, individuals ask many questions (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Berger, 1979; Berger & Kellerman, 1983). As uncertainty decreases, the number of questions asked decreases as well. While any number of questions can produce helpful answers, most of the questions tend to be requests for information about the other's self (Douglas, 1987).

While question-asking is an efficient way to gain information about the other person, the strategy also presents difficulties. Berger (1979, p. 140) notes that too many questions change a conversation into an interview; as a result, the person being questioned might begin to dislike the feeling of being interrogated. In addition, extensive question-asking (without question-asking from the partner) violates the norm of reciprocity. Finally, there is no guarantee that the answers one receives are truthful. As a result, individuals must find a balance between seeking information and behaving in a socially appropriate manner (Berger & Kellerman, 1983; Kellerman & Berger, 1984). Ultimately, then, for most individuals, social constraints restrict the rate and intimacy of information

requests, making question-asking, in some ways, an inefficient way to find out about others (Douglas, 1990; Douglas, 1994).

When individuals are not able to reduce uncertainty, the result typically is a failed relationship. Douglas (1990) concluded that even if individuals use a wide array of information-seeking devices, if the partner is unwilling to sufficiently disclose, uncertainty will continue to exist. Thus, to some extent, uncertainty reduction depends on the partner. On the other hand, if the individual behaves in a socially inappropriate manner by grilling the partner, the relationship probably will not develop at all. Berger (1986), in fact, discovered, and Parks and Adelman (1983) agreed, that if interaction cannot be coordinated due to high levels of uncertainty, the relationship will terminate.

URT helps explain failed relationships in terms of those who have been involved in debate. One of the skills taught in forensics is information seeking. Debaters must continue to question as they research positions on the topic. They learn how to engage in cross-examination -- grilling someone and being grilled for six total minutes in each debate round. In addition, debaters are trained to ask questions in order to score points or to win, not to understand the relational other's aims. Coupled with our innate need as humans to decrease uncertainty, information seeking is something that debaters know how to and are encouraged to do. In fact, much of the activity revolves around principles of information seeking, and the notion that nothing is absolutely "certain." Such "global uncertainty" tends to promote in high levels of information seeking (Douglas, 1994). In the forensics context, such a practice is not unusual and is socially acceptable.

However, when one is trained to ask as many questions as possible in an attempt to decrease

uncertainty, it is likely that the balance between question-asking and socially appropriate norms will be lost. To a debater, asking a series of questions is not unusual; yet, to someone who is not involved in that context, the questions appear like an interrogation, and/or the interaction does not appear to be reciprocal. Such social unease (and, thus, uncertainty) is unsettling and is damaging to a developing relationship. Opponents in a debate round handle cross-examination in a professional, effective manner; relational partners typically are not equipped to handle being cross-examined (nor should we expect them to be).

In addition, if the practice of question-asking is to reduce uncertainty, debaters, in their unending quest for knowledge, might not ever feel they have enough information to decrease uncertainty. If the individual feels that his/her partner is not providing sufficient or truthful information, the questioning will continue. If uncertainty still exists, the likelihood of relational termination increases. Therefore, URT operates on two levels: first, the debater might cross the line of social appropriateness, badgering his/her partner until the relationship terminates, or, second, the student might never feel he/she has enough information to reduce the uncertainty, thereby not pursuing the relationship. Our position is that debaters take URT to the extreme, which results in relationships that do not begin or relationships that terminate as soon as the partner decides to not tolerate further inquisition.

Second Guessing

URT provides the impetus for second-guessing theory. If humans are information seekers, and tend to gather information in an attempt to reduce the uncertainty of the interaction, they also will attempt to reduce uncertainty of particular messages. They do so by utilizing the process of

"second-guessing."

Second-guessing is a cognitive process in which the receiver, upon hearing a message which he/she feels is biased, will attempt to "de-bias" the message to gain a "truer" account. The receiver believes that he/she can "correct for" the bias contained within the message (Hewes & Graham, 1988; Hewes, Graham, Doelger, & Pavitt, 1985). Typically, second-guessing occurs due to the need for uncertainty reduction when 1) people obtain indirect information, 2) the information is useful and 3) they realize the information might be distorted (Doelger, Hewes & Graham, 1986).

The process of second-guessing involves four steps. First, in the vigilance phase, individuals become aware of the need to second-guess. The primary drive is for accurate information (Hewes & Graham, 1988). Next, in the reinterpretation phase, the individual must chose whether or not to doubt the message. If there is a need to second-guess, he/she will attempt to reinterpret the message. Of course, this requires one to be "mindful;" messages are closely and critically examined (Hewes & Graham, 1988). In contrast, mindlessness consists of accepting and acting upon messages without reflecting upon their meaning. The third phase is the reinterpretation assessment. In this phase, individuals determine if their reinterpretations are adequate; if there is a need for more information, individuals will engage in more question-asking and information gathering (Hewes & Graham, 1988). The social tactic phase involves acting upon the reinterpretation -- how the individual chooses to respond (Hewes & Graham, 1988).

Thus, the premise behind second-guessing theory is that, when a message is presented that might be biased, the receiver can choose to reinterpret that message. In debate, students are taught to second-guess. There is no "true" argument; it is always possible to counter a claim. If one does

not have evidence, at the very least, coaches teach their students to listen to the claim and "press" the other team to provide more information. In addition, when the individual is attempting to determine whether the other's disclosure is truthful (recall, this is a drawback to question-asking discussed in terms of URT), a forensics student's training suggests that no statement is completely truthful -- second-guessing should be commonplace. Therefore, debaters may have what Doelger, Hewes and Graham label "dispositional traits" in which they are "globally distrusting," second-guessing everyone (1988). While this skill works very well in debate rounds, in interpersonal relationships, it can create havoc. Imagine interacting with someone who second-guesses each message you produce. Even more troubling is the enactment of the fourth phase, involving social tactics. In debate, when one second-guesses an argument, thinking that there is bias underlying it, he/she openly challenges the opponent. It is a common (and supportable, we believe) myth that debaters can argue about anything and will not hesitate to openly challenge and confront the opposition regarding the perceived bias and their reinterpretation. (Just ride in a van with debaters for awhile, and this behavior will be quite evident.) In interpersonal relationships, this strategy is not always wise, as, if for no other reason, it is annoying. In addition, it is impossible to establish trust when one's messages are constantly being second-guessed. Thus, second-guessing theory effectively explains the argumentative nature of the forensics student and why that nature might not foster solid relationships with others.

Interpersonal Influence

Research in the area of compliance gaining suggests that individuals use an array of strategies to influence others (see, for example, Marwell & Schmitt, 1967; Wiseman & Schenk-

Hamlin, 1981). Although there is some question as to the validity of methods used to determine such strategies (Burleson, Wilson, Waltman, Goering, Ely & Whaley, 1988), researchers have concluded that the strategies which are selected are based on the intention of the actor (Schenck-Hamlon, Georgacarakos, & Wiseman, 1982), on the situation (Levine & Wheeless, 1990), and/or on secondary goals such as identity, interaction, resources, and arousal management (Dillard, Segrin, & Harden, 1989). Cody and McGlaughlin (1980) systematized compliance gaining into a six-factor typology: (1) the degree of intimacy between the target and the actor; (2) the extent to which compliance will personally benefit the actor; (3) the consequences of the compliance-gaining attempt to the relationship between the target and actor; (4) the rights of the actor in the situation; (5) the extent to which the target typically dominates the actor; and (6) the degree of resistance the actor expects the target to offer. Finally, researchers have discovered that individuals usually use compliance-gaining strategies which will help the other "save face" (Craig, Tracy & Spisak, 1986), although individuals with power will tend to use politeness less often (Baxter, 1984).

While most individuals, for whatever reason, use a common set of compliance-gaining strategies in order to gain others' compliance, debaters tend to use argument and reason-giving to gain compliance. Debaters are trained in winning and losing with immediate consequences, especially in the age of immediate revelation of decisions. Hence, debaters might attempt to win an "interpersonal" position just to win, merely for the ego satisfaction of winning without concern for the larger bearing on the relationship. Therefore, if three reasons are not sufficient, the debater might provide another ten, thinking that a "judge" will look at the flow and clearly see that the opponent is "spread out of the room." However, in some cases, it does not matter how many

reasons are provided, if none of them are compelling. Moreover, if a partner feels "spread out of the room," he/she might be much less willing to comply. The compliance-gaining strategies of argument and reason-giving are impolite, meaning that debaters tend not to think about face-saving when attempting to influence others. In fact, such impoliteness might make a partner feel that he/she is constantly in a one-down position, leading to feelings of victimization or refusals for continued communication. The choice of strategies also reflects the possibility that debaters are less concerned with interaction and arousal management goals and more concerned with establishing the goal of identity. If interpersonal interactions become nothing more than extended debates to gain compliance; if one partner continues to treat his/her relational partner as both opponent and judge, the relationship can be doomed to failure.

In addition, typically there is not a great deal of intimacy between the debater and judge, so students do not get to practice their compliance-gaining requests in intimate relationships. Miller et al. (1977) have discovered that different types of strategies are more successful in intimate relationships. Lacking experience and training in both intimate and nonintimate realms, debaters learn only a single competitive type of compliance-gaining. Winning a debate not only furthers the aims of the debater, but also generally increases their personal satisfaction. When debaters have fulfilled their ego needs by being successful in the debate arena, they may not feel the need, or have the skills to practice their compliance-gaining in more intimate interpersonal relationships. The consequences of debating are quite clear: immediate victory or defeat. Admittedly, these are rather short-term consequences. Strategies in interpersonal relationships may well have more long-term consequences, such as the continuation of the relationship, and if debaters believe that every

decision has roughly a two-hour time frame, it may hinder their ability for longitudinal insight. Therefore, the perennial need for compliance and the staunch training in but a single type of compliance-gaining can do a great disservice interpersonally to those involved in debate.

Dialectic Theory

Baxter (1988, 1993) contends that a series of dialectical tensions pervade relationships such that relational participants must negotiate and resolve tensions in order for an effective relationship to occur. She articulates three overarching dialectical tensions in her typology: integration/separation, stability/change, and expression/privacy. Baxter and Montgomery (1996) describe these dialectical poles, not as opposites, but as "both/and," noting that relationships require simultaneous consideration of both spectrums of these poles. Opposing forces in relationships create dialogic complexity (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). As relationships inherently must move toward closeness, there also is a force continually pulling toward separation and the quest for autonomy. Similarly, one purpose interpersonal relationships serve is to create stability, yet given the ever uncertain circumstances surrounding interpersonal relationships, there is the constant desire and need to cope with change. Finally, as relationships demand some level of expressing feelings and being open, this characteristic also is not constant. Baxter and Montgomery illustrate from a two-year romantic relationship: "You just have to realize sometimes the importance of not talking about certain things. Sometimes, it's better to just let it pass on some topics. But we both realize that what keeps our relationships growing is our willingness to talk about personal things" (1996, p.6). Hence, this need to talk and not talk provides the final thread of the dichotomy.

On the surface, dialectic theory would appear to perfectly describe the bifurcation of

thinking which occurs in a debate round. Debaters are trained to view the world in affirmative and negative terms, and the more successful ones perceive it in both simultaneously. However, upon closer examination, the debate mind set creates even greater difficulties for relationships when viewed through dialectical theory.

According to Baxter (1990), individuals cope with dialectical tensions by using a variety of strategies. She found that the most common strategy was separation, either by alternating between the poles or through segmenting particular topics. Regardless of the type of strategy selected, Montgomery (1993) notes that partners must constantly work to adjust to dialectical tensions and must use tension and strategies for dealing with it as the basis of their relationship. When relationships are unhealthy, partners do not balance the dialectical tensions well, leading to potentially abusive environments (Sabourin & Stamp, 1995).

Unfortunately, debaters do not engage in the same types of strategy selections as those who have not been trained in the activity. First, debaters must grant adherence to one pole over the other. While debating the affirmative, a debater must be fully invested and able to convince others of the worthiness of his/her position. The bifurcated nature of debate inherently stresses two separate world views, only one of which can be granted adherence at the end of the debate. Continually pursuing such an end cannot help but spill over into relational thinking, as critics must make and debaters must live with "forced choice" situations continually. While such choices might appear to resemble the separation strategy, it is not cyclic nor is it segmented; it is a rigid, polarized form of separation. Next, the policy nature of debate has debaters constantly trying to change policy instead of learning how to live with it or seeking stability; Montgomery (1993, p, 221) suggests

that, rather than trying to change the situation, typical relational partners accommodate and adjust. Finally, students in forensics are trained to debate an issue. "Not talk" would appear as an unwillingness to debate and hence be considered an unacceptable option since by the rules of debate, all things are debatable. Should a relational partner not wish to discuss some interpersonal issue, he/she could be provoked to do so by the student with debate training, so that this facet of the typology is not within the realm of consideration by those with debate experience. So, it would seem that debaters have been trained not to appreciate the dichotomies of Baxter's dialectical theory, but to embrace only one extreme. Hence, by investing in a position, argument, or side, the thinking of those in debate becomes polarized, exactly the opposite of the pluralism Baxter and Montgomery (1996) contend is necessary for interactional competence.

Social Penetration Theory

Altman and Taylor's (1973) social penetration theory suggests that as relationships grow, both the depth and breadth of interaction increases. Such relational development includes exchange of information, exchange of positive and negative affect, and mutual activities (Daher & Banikiotes, 1976). Altman and Taylor liken their model to peeling away the layers of an onion; as topics become broader, the degree of self disclosure becomes deeper, and nonverbal behaviors become more relaxed (Keiser & Altman, 1976). Others have found that reciprocity is cyclical – that self-disclosure does not necessarily follow a developmental pattern (Vanlear, 1987).

The first dimension of Altman and Taylor's model is richness, which describes the breadth characteristic of self disclosure. Often, debaters' all-consuming thinking is only as broad as the current resolution's affirmative land. Debaters are trained to view the resolution with very clear

parameters, and the realms which exceed this view are nontopical. Likewise, debaters may have a very narrow view of the world relationally. It is often easier to spend vast quantities of time conversing about global warming or nuclear war than it is to discuss issues one believes are personally important. Such neglect of one's partner's understanding of the topic is the key to a unhealthy marriage, according to Honeycutt (1986). He concludes that communication effectiveness is directly related to perceived partner understanding.

Similarly, the issues that matter most to debaters are the ones which provide the "depth" of the relationship. Such focus can lead to non-debaters feeling as if they do not have much in common with their mates; this lack of similarity in terms of amount and level of disclosure can lead to decreased attraction (Daher & Banikiotes, 1976). Debaters select their favorite positions and "become deep" on their research, so much so that on the circuit they may fancy themselves as the foremost experts on a specific issue. This view also short-circuits successful relationships. When individuals become so circumscribed on a single issue, they often have difficulty breaking free of that all-consuming issue and certainly have difficulty relating to issues which may be of deep interpersonal concern, but which do not have the overwhelming global impact of their favorite debate position. According to our observations, debaters have a great deal of difficulty dealing with self disclosure, particularly among non-debaters. While debating, and even when coaching, such individuals tend to think solely about debate – positions they can run, old rounds revisited, or policy implications. We have observed debaters "cutting" evidence in class, on the bus, and in a variety of interpersonal situations. Thus, the degree of both depth and breadth in debaters' and coaches' relationships is limited, and, in many cases, it is much easier for debaters to cultivate platonic

relationships with other debaters (to be renewed on a bi-weekly basis throughout the season) than to risk forging deeper relationships with non-debaters.

Social penetration theory help explain why debaters' relationships tend to decline. Yoder and Nichols (1980) explain that parties in a relationship must weigh three factors when deciding whether or not to self disclose: costs and rewards of the relationship, situational determinants such as societal pressure on the couple, and attitudes. They discovered that attitudes towards self disclosure were associated with dissolution; divorced and married people had distinctly different attitudes. Discrepant attitudes towards the topic and form of disclosure, as noted above, would certainly play a role in debaters' relational terminations. Similarly, Tolstedt and Stokes (1984) suggest that as intimacy decreases, self disclosure breadth decreases, and the valence of the self disclosure becomes more negative. They also indicate that decreased intimacy is associated with increased depth, presumably due to the discussions individuals have when a relationship is terminating. Perhaps this is one time when a debater's relational partner can focus discussion on the relationship itself.

Conclusions

In this survey of contemporary interpersonal theory, we have attempted to show the inconsistency between the skills that are taught in contemporary debate training and the skills which contemporary interpersonal communication theory dictates are necessary for satisfying relationships.

Without a doubt, debate is an intense activity, one with many benefits for students' research skills, presentational skills, and critical thinking. However, the mind set created is one, we argue,

that may not foster healthy interpersonal relationships. Sadly, forensics is not alone. As noted previously, researchers in similar fields, such as the law (Fischer, 1990), have concluded that the result of such intense issue-oriented thinking is responsible for the lack of interpersonal success for participants in those fields. Ironically, many debaters become lawyers, furthering honing the ineffective skills they learned as undergraduates.

Through this current analysis, we argue that participation in debate creates a unique standpoint, which, in turn, plays havoc with a debater's ability to cope with uncertainty, encourages second-guessing, impedes rather than fosters dialectical thinking, rewards uni-dimensional compliance-gaining strategies, and focuses on depth over breadth in self disclosure, when both dimensions are needed for success.

We are not yet ready to call into question the overall value of debate training, but we are cognizant of the difficulties it may present in the creation and maintenance of strong interpersonal relationships. Continued research on the longitudinal effects of debate training must be undertaken to assess the health and success of interpersonal relationships for those who continue to participate in the debate activity.

References

Altman, I. & Taylor, D.A. (1973). Social penetration: The development of interpersonal relationships. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Baxter, L.A. (1984). An investigation of compliance-gaining as politeness. Human Communication Research, 10, 427-56.

Baxter, L.A. (1988). A dialectical perspective on communication strategies in relationship development. In S.W. Duck (Ed.), A handbook of personal relationships, (pp. 257-273), New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Baxter, L.A. (1990). Dialectical contradictions in relational development. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 7, 69-88.

Baxter, L.A. (1993). The social side of personal relationships: A dialectical analysis. In S. Duck (Ed.), Social context and relationships, (pp. 139-65). Newbury Park, CA.: Sage.

Baxter, L.A. & Montgomery, B.M. (1996). Relating: Dialogues and dialectics. New York: Guilford.

Berger, C.R. (1979). Beyond initial interaction: Uncertainty, understanding, and the development of interpersonal relationships. In H. Giles & R.N. St.Clair (Eds.), Language and social psychology, (pp. 122-44). Baltimore: University Park Press.

Berger, C.R. (1986). Uncertain outcome values in predicted relationships: Uncertainty reduction theory then and now. Human Communication Research, 13, 34-38.

Berger, C.R. & Calabrese, R.J. (1975). Some explorations in initial interactions and beyond: Toward a developmental theory of interpersonal communication. Human Communication Research, 1, 99-112.

Berger, C.R. & Kellerman, K.A. (1983). To ask or not to ask: Is that a question? In R. Bostrom (Ed.), Communication yearbook 7, (pp. 342-68). Beverly Hills, CA.: Sage Publications.

Burleson, B.R., Wilson, S.R., Waltman, M.S., Goering, E.M., Ely, T.K., & Whaley, B.B. (1988). Item desirability effects in compliance-gaining research: Seven studies documenting artifacts in the strategy selection procedure. Human Communication Research, 14, 429-86.

Cody, M.J. & McGlaughlin, M.L. (1980). Perceptions of compliance-gaining situations: A dimensional analysis. Communication Monographs, 47, 132-48.

Craig, R.T., Tracy, K., & Spisak, F. (1986). The discourse of requests: An assessment of a politeness approach. Human Communication Research, 12, 437-68.

Daher, D.M & Banikiotes. P.G. (1976). Interpersonal attraction and rewarding aspects of disclosure content and level. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 33, 492-496.

Davis, K.E. & Latty-Mann, H. (1987). Love styles and relationship quality: A contribution to validation. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 4, 409-428.

Dillard, J.P., Segrin, C., & Harden, J.M. (1989). Primary and secondary goals in the production of interpersonal influence messages. Communication Monographs, 56, 19-38.

Doelger, J.A., Hewes, D.E., & Graham, M.L. (1986). Knowing when to "second-guess:" The mindful analysis of messages. Human Communication Research, 12, 301-38.

Douglas, W. (1987). Question-asking in same- and opposite-sex initial interactions: The effects of anticipated future interaction. Human Communication Research, 14, 230-245.

Douglas, W. (1990). Uncertainty, information-seeking, and liking during initial interaction. Western Journal of Speech Communication, 54, 66-81.

Douglas, W. (1994). The acquaintanceship process: An examination of uncertainty, information seeking, and social attraction during initial conversation. Communication Research, 21, 154-76.

Fischer, W.F. (1990). Lawyering as a way of life. Duquesne Law Review, 28, 671-75.

Hartsock, N.C.M. (1983). The feminist standpoint: Developing the ground for a specifically feminist historical materialism. In S. Harding & M.B. Hintikka (Eds.). Discovering reality: Feminist perspectives on epistemology, metaphysics, methodology, and philosophy of science, (pp. 283-310), Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidell Publishing Company.

Hecht, M.L. (1978). Toward a conceptualization of interpersonal communication satisfaction. Quarterly Journal of Speech, 64, 47-62.

Hewes, D.E. & Graham, M.L. (1988). Second-guessing theory: Review and extension. In J. Anderson (Ed.), Communication Yearbook 12, (pp. 213-248), Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Hewes, D.E., Graham, M.L., Doelger, J., & Pavitt, C. (1985). "Second-guessing:" Message interpretation in social networks. Human Communication Research, 11, 299-334.

Honeycutt, J.M. (1986). A model of marital functioning based on an attraction paradigm and social penetration dimensions. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 48, 651-667.

Levine, T.R. & Wheeless, L.R. (1990). Cross-situational consistency and use/nonuse tendencies in compliance-gaining tactic selection. Southern Communication Journal, 56, 1-11.

Keiser, G.J. & Altman, I. (1976). Relationship of nonverbal behavior to the social penetration process. Human Communication Research, 2, 147-161.

Kellerman, K. & Berger, C.A. (1984). Affect and social information acquisition: Sit back, relax, and tell me about yourself." In R.N Bostrom (Ed.), Communication Yearbook 8, (pp. 412-445). Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Marwell, G. & Schmitt, D.R. (1967). Dimensions of compliance-gaining behavior: An empirical analysis. Sociometry, 30, 350-64.

McBath, J.H. (1975). Forensics as communication. Skokie, IL: National Textbook.

Miller, G. & Boster, F., Roloff, M., & Siebold, D. (1977). Compliance-gaining message strategies: A typology and some findings concerning effects of situational differences. Communication Monographs, 44, 37-51.

Montgomery, B.M. (1993). Relationship maintenance versus relationship change: A dialectical dilemma. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 10, 205-223.

Parks, M.R. & Adelman, M.B. (1983). Communication networks and the development of romantic relationships: An expansion of uncertainty reduction theory. Human Communication Research, 10, 55-79.

Parson, D.W. (1984). American forensics in perspective. Annandale, VA.; SCA.

Planalp, S. & Honeycutt, J.M. (1985). Events that increase uncertainty in personal relationships. Human Communication Research, 11, 593-604.

Schenck-Hamlin, W.J., Georgacarakos, G.N., & Wiseman, R.L. (1982). A formal account of interpersonal compliance-gaining. Communication Quarterly, 30, 173-80.

Sabourin, T.C. & Stamp, G.H. (1995). Communication and the experience of dialectical tensions in family life: An examination of abusive and nonabusive families. Communication Monographs, 62, 213-242.

Tolstedt, B.E. & Stokes, J.P. (1984). Self-disclosure, intimacy and the depenetration process. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 46, 84-90.

Vanlear, Jr. C.A. (1987). The formation of social relationships: A longitudinal study of social penetration. Human Communication Research, 13, 299-322.

Wiseman, R.L & Schenck-Hamlin, W. (1981). A multidimensional scaling validation of an inductively-derived set of compliance-gaining strategies. Communication Monographs, 48, 251-70.

Wood, J.T. (1993). Engendered relations: Interaction, caring, power, and responsibility in intimacy. In S.W Duck (Ed.), Understanding relationship processes, 3: Social context and relationships, (pp. 26-54). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Wood, J.T. (1994). Engendered identities: Shaping voice and mind through gender. In D.R. Vocate (Ed.), Interpersonal communication: Different voices, different minds, (pp.145-67), Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Wood, J.T. (1996). Standpoint theory: Social locations. In K.M. Galven & P. Cooper (Eds.), Making connections: Readings in relational communication, (pp.36-39), Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury Publications.

Yoder, J.D. & Nichols, R.C. (1980). A life perspective comparison of married and divorced

persons. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 42, 413-419.